funding also resulted in an inadequate supply of textbooks and materials. Financial disparity among the schools was legitimized in statewide legislation in 1883 and 1885 when the Democratic legislature codified local practices. The legislation authorized school districts to distribute tax revenue along racial lines. Historian James Leloudis declared that "this method of financing stood to cripple black education." [82] Again, after regaining full control of state government through the 1900 election, Democrats sought to limit funding for black schools through two bills in 1901. Governor Charles Aycock felt that black education was the answer to the "negro question" and used his influence to quash the legislation. He insisted that whites could not continue to rule through "force and repression" and that whites had a vested interest in black education.[83] Despite attempts by men such as Aycock to advocate for educational standards, the trend of reduced school funding persisted. The only way Wilmington's black schools were able to provide any degree of higher education to students was through northern benevolence and the determination of local African American leaders to press for the best options for their children.[84]

There were two districts for whites and two for blacks in the city.[85] Although black school-age children outnumbered white school-age children both before and after November 10, 1898, the city's schools for black students were regularly given less funding for maintenance, books, and salaries than were the white schools.[86] The gap between funding for white schools and black schools grew wider after 1898.[87] White

[82] The 1883 legislation became known as the Dortch law for the state senator, William Dortch of Goldsboro, who introduced the bill. The Dortch law was denounced by many African American leaders and was eventually declared unconstitutional. Subsequent legislation in 1885 reworked the Dortch law and gave leniency to local districts to distribute their wealth as they saw fit. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*, 121-122.

[83] Aycock realized that limiting school funding based on racial taxation possibly would invite federal intervention. He also advocated that black students be properly educated through curriculum and care tightly controlled by North Carolina whites. Aycock chose to promote fully the separation of the races in education to, in the end, benefit the black race to fit them into their subordinate role, peacefully forcing the black population into a different set of rules for education. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*, 177-180; Connor and Poe, *Life and Speeches of Charles B. Aycock.*

[84] Donations for salaries, supplies, and school buildings for Wilmington and elsewhere in North Carolina came from northern benefactors such as George Peabody, James Gregory, the American Missionary Association, and, later, from the philanthropy of Julius Rosenwald, whose funds contributed greatly to the construction of school buildings in the 1920s. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 144-173.

[85] The two white districts were Hemenway and Union School. The two black districts were Peabody and Williston.

[86] In July 1898, there were 1,763 white students (55 percent of all white school age children in the county) enrolled in Wilmington public schools and 2,290 black students (51 percent of black school age children in the county). The property values of the white schools in the county totaled $37,250.00 and the property values of the black schools totaled $12,850.00. Report of Superintendent M. C. S. Noble to State Department of Public Instruction, July, 1898, Superintendent's Reports, Records of the Department of Public Instruction, State Archives, Office of Archives and History, Raleigh.

[87] In July 1899, the number of students of both races declined to only 1,188 white students (57 percent of all white school age children in the county) and 2,110 black students (47 percent of all black school age children in the county). However, property values increased to $76,690.00 for white schools and $17,500.00 for black schools. The numbers gap again deepened in 1900 and 1901. By 1901, 40 percent (1,175) of the African American school-age children in the county attended school and 63 percent (2,087) of the white school-age children attended schools. That year, white school properties were valued at $82,600.00 and black school properties were valued at $18,050.00. Leloudis noted that the result of low funding for black schools resulted in "overcrowded, ramshackle classrooms."